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Need a Fake ID? Artist Paul Ramírez Jonas Will Make You One for Free at the New Museum

For his new show, the artist will create a fake identity based on your real information.

Sarah Cascone (<https://news.artnet.com/about/sarah-cascone-25>), July 27, 2017



Paul Ramírez Jonas, *Fake IDs* in "Paul Ramírez Jonas: Half-Truths" (2017) at the New Museum. Courtesy of the New Museum/Scott Rudd.

He isn't helping underage college kids buy beer, but artist [Paul Ramírez Jonas](http://www.artnet.com/artists/paul-ramirez-jonas) (<http://www.artnet.com/artists/paul-ramirez-jonas>) is making fake IDs at his exhibition and residency "[Half Truths](http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/paul-ramirezjonas-half-truths)" (<http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/paul-ramirezjonas-half-truths>) at New York's [New Museum](http://www.newmuseum.org/) (<http://www.newmuseum.org/>). Visitors can pick theirs up during museum hours, and cardholders get free admission to the New Museum through the end of the summer.

The performance piece, titled *Fake IDs*, is staffed by members of the Teen Apprenticeship Program, which offers summer employment to young people. To take part, visitors must temporarily turn over the non-monetary contents of their wallets, such as their credit cards, licenses, work or student IDs, library cards, and even coffee loyalty cards.



Paul Ramírez Jonas, *Fake IDs* in “Paul Ramírez Jonas: Half-Truths” (2017) at the New Museum. Courtesy of the New Museum/Scott Rudd.

Ramírez Jonas (<http://www.paulramirezjonas.com/>), or a member of his teenaged team, stationed at a folding table, will make color copies of each document on sticker paper. From there, he will cut and paste elements from all your various IDs—a photo from one, an address from another—onto a blank card, based on your selections. “We try to make a brand new identity for you out of your old identity,” Ramírez Jonas explained in an audio guide available on the museum website.

In addition to creating the new individual IDs, *Fake IDs* highlights the collective identities of the cardholders. If a visitor has three different photos from three different IDs, only one will be used on their new card. The others will be cut out and incorporated into a sheet of portraits of all the participants, stripped of all identifying information. Similarly, Ramírez Jonas will isolate city names, creating lists of the places that the participants have ties to.



Paul Ramírez Jonas, *Alternative Facts* in "Paul Ramírez Jonas: Half-Truths" (2017) at the New Museum. Courtesy of the New Museum/Scott Rudd.

The project is a rumination on issues of identity and the corporate, governmental, and social systems that define it. Of course, admitted Ramírez Jonas, "as soon as you think of identity in this day and age, you start thinking of identity theft." To that point, he has taken precautions to assuage the concerns of would-be participants.

The information on their IDs is only copied, never digitized, and the last step of the performance is to shred all the unused information. "Between shredding and sifting the information, your identity remains safe," said Ramírez Jonas. "You can think about how this information kind of represents you and also represents a danger to you, and all the things we need to do to safeguard our identity."



Paul Ramírez Jonas manning the notary table for his piece *Alternative Facts* in "Paul Ramírez Jonas: Half-Truths" (2017) at the New Museum. Courtesy of the New Museum/Scott Rudd.

He also includes a challenge question on the back of each ID, in much the same way that your bank website requires you to provide information about things such as your high school's mascot. "It's to really make sure you are who you say you are in the future," Ramírez Jonas explained. "So we ask you your mother's maiden name, or your first pet—except, in this case, the question and answer is completely up to you."

The show includes two other works, also presented at folding tables. *Alternative Facts* is staffed by a performer playing a notary public, who is there to notarize museum goers' lies, providing documentation that

“certifies” them as the truth. To pay for the service, you must give the notary gold, which you can get by having the performer electroplate your spare coins with gold leaf.



Paul Ramírez Jonas, *I Bet You a Dollar It Will Rain Tomorrow* in “Paul Ramírez Jonas: Half-Truths” (2017) at the New Museum. Courtesy of the New Museum/Scott Rudd.

In exchange, your lie, now legally confirmed as truth, is hung on the wall. You also get a copy of your own so that “if later someone challenges you about your age or whatever you lied about, you can produce this document,” said Ramírez Jonas. The work takes its name from presidential adviser Kellyanne Conway’s controversial coinage of the term “alternative facts” in response to former press secretary Sean Spicer’s inaccurate statements about crowd size at President Donald Trump’s inauguration.

I Bet You a Dollar It Will Rain Tomorrow, which Ramírez Jonas described as the most experimental of the three works, is a casino table where visitors can fill in the value on blank chips and make whatever kind of bet they like.



Paul Ramírez Jonas, *I Bet You a Dollar It Will Rain Tomorrow* in "Paul Ramírez Jonas: Half-Truths" (2017) at the New Museum. Courtesy of the New Museum/Scott Rudd.

According to the museum's description of the exhibition, "these works speak to a political climate in which authoritarian tactics seek to delegitimize the participatory checks and balances of democratic truth through pronouncements of 'dishonest media.'" Together, the performances call into question the nature of the truth, and our ability to definitively identify it.

"Paul Ramírez Jonas: Half-Truths" is on view at the New Museum, 235 Bowery, Fifth Floor, New York, July 5–September 17, 2017.

Ramírez Jonas will perform Alternative Facts every Thursday evening, other than August 24, 7 p.m.–9 p.m. (pay-what-you-wish hours).

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